

Billings Public Schools, School Health Advisory Council Nutrition Resolutions

Proper nutrition along with physical activity has been shown to improve cognitive function and reduce the risk of overweight and obesity in people of all ages. To curb the obesity epidemic, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), the American Dietetic Association, pediatric obesity experts, and federal legislators, recommend that foods sold in schools either as part of the federally funded school breakfast and lunch program or in snack outlets and vending machines meet the Dietary Guidelines for Americans.

In light of these expert recommendations, and the goals set forth in the Billings Public Schools Wellness Policy, the Billings Public Schools School Health Advisory Council (SHAC) resolves that a concerted effort be made to improve the nutritional content of all foods sold and served in Billings Public Schools.

As a first step toward achieving the goal of healthier foods and beverages on school campuses, the SHAC approved the Lunch, Ala Carte, And Vending Menu Guidelines developed by Montana Team Nutrition. These guidelines include elimination of sugar containing soft drinks, and restrictions on the fat and sugar content as well as serving sizes of all foods served as part of the reimbursable meals program or sold for snacks (see <http://www.opi.mt.gov/schoofood/wellness.html>).

Specifically the SHAC recommends:

1. Implementation of the above-mentioned Montana Team Nutrition Lunch and Snack Guidelines beginning in fall 2007. Sodexo food service has already agreed to this policy.
2. Teachers be asked to cease the practice of using food as individual rewards. Local dietitian and nationally recognized school nutrition expert, Dale Hayes, MS, RD will provide teachers with tips for using non-food rewards. This information will be posted on the SHAC portion of the Billings Public Schools website.
3. The only beverages that are routinely drunk in the classroom by students and teachers should be water, milk and/or fruit juice.
4. All foods and beverages served in classrooms as part of a celebration in, group reward, or class project should meet the Team Nutrition Guidelines. Foods that do not meet these Guidelines (such as ethnic dishes served as part of a curriculum unit) may be served if approved by the principal. Grammar schools should develop guidelines on school birthday treats, aiming for healthier foods and smaller servings of sweets.
5. School administrators, teachers and PTA groups review their fund raising efforts and develop a plan for reducing the amount of snack foods and sweets sold for this purpose.

Approved May 15, 2007

Here are some of the ways that Billings Public Schools School Health Action Committee (SHAC) is working to implement their nutrition recommendations:

Current Activities:

- Meet with the school principals to introduce them to the key SHAC recommendations affecting their schools.
- A class from MSU-Billings has offered their services in creating nutrition messages for young children. The class would like to put their message on the computer system at the schools.
- The district's food service management company, Sodexo, has revamped the middle and high school a la carte menu and snack bar menus to meet the Montana Healthy Challenge guidelines developed by Montana Team Nutrition (<http://www.opi.mt.gov/schoolfood/healthiermt.html>).
- A high school program, Creations, features ethnic foods that meet the reimbursable meal criteria and provides a way to introduce reimbursable meals into the snack bar areas. High school students enjoy Asian stir-fry meals served in Chinese Restaurant takeout containers, Mexican specialties, and Italian foods including hand-tossed pizzas and calzones.
- A pilot program testing a made-to-order deli sandwich bar is about to be launched at West High. Plans call for introducing the deli to other schools later in the year.
- Informing students as to why all these changes are taking place is agreed to be a very important aspect of making the changes successful.

Future Goals:

- Middle school principals will be approached about the possibility of allowing SHAC members to give presentations about the SHAC's mission and goals to middle school students during the middle school SOAR programs.
- Check into some of the grants and community resources that are available that would be beneficial.
- Developing guidelines for birthday celebrations at the elementary level and foods sold during fundraising and sporting events, and developing a system for measuring progress and finding ways to inform and educate the community about SHAC's mission and goals.
- Establishment of elementary school-specific committees to develop plans for improving the nutritional value of foods brought in by parents for birthday celebrations.